PHIL343 Biomedical Ethics
Fall 2016, MWF 11:35-12:25
Strathcona Anatomy & Dentistry 1/12

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Course Description
This course will investigate philosophical issues arising from the practice of health care and health care system. The course is divided into three parts. The first part is focused on the central issues in conventional bioethics. Topics include non-therapeutic abortion, infanticide (after-birth abortion), physician-assisted suicide, prenatal screening, genetic enhancement, etc. The purpose of the first part is to understand the philosophical way of thinking, as distinguished from legal or political thinking, in medical contexts. The second part is focused on the ethics of allocating scarce health care resources. We will focus on three fundamental questions concerning justice in health and health care: (1) What is health and how do we measure health benefit?; (2) When are health inequalities unjust?; (3) How can we meet health needs fairly under resource constraints? The purpose of the second section is to understand how a population’s health care system should be evaluated. The third part is group research and presentation. The purpose of group research is to experience “mock ethics committee” in hospital or health policy unit. In the real situation of ethics committee, people with different expertise, cultural/religious background, and goals must agree to a set of recommendations on difficult problems in limited time line. Throughout the third part, I will invite you to put yourself in a position of health policy maker, health care administrator, and hospital director, who encounter difficult, complex, and highly ethical decision problems. By the end of this course, you will learn (a) the theoretical structure of ethical problems in medical practice, (b) how we reason when we allocate health and health care resources fairly and evaluate the quality of health care system, and (c) how we think philosophically.

Trigger alert
• This course is a 300-level course in philosophy. It is not a vocational training course for medical professionals. We do NOT assume any prior knowledge of philosophy. However, we DO assume the elementary level of analytical and writing skills in humanities.
• Having said this, you do not need to worry too much. If you took some humanities courses at CEGEP or one or two 200 level courses in humanities at McGill, then you will be fairly comfortable with the course materials and requirements. Through a series of small assignments and a midterm essay, you will have opportunities to improve the analytical and writing skills. In any case, we strongly recommend reading
  o Jim Pryor’s Guidelines on Writing a Philosophy Paper (http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/guidelines/writing.html), and/or
  o Vaughn and McIntosh, Writing Philosophy: A Guide for Canadian Students (OUP Canada, 2013), and/or
  o consulting with McGill Writing Centre Tutorial Service (https://www.mcgill.ca/mwc/tutorial-service)
• In this course, we will discuss sensitive and emotionally challenging topics. Please be prepared to discuss the sensitive topics in a serious and respectful manner.

Format
There will be two lectures and one conference per week. Lectures meet Mondays and Wednesdays 11:35-12:25 at Strathcona Anatomy & Dentistry 1/12. The first lecture is on September 2. Conferences meet Fridays and
start on September 16 (exception: we will meet at Strathcona Anatomy & Dentistry 1/12 at 11:35-12:35 on September 9, November 25, and December 2).

Textbook:
• Articles on MyCourses

Supplementary books (highly recommended):
• John Harris. The Value of Life. Routledge (1985). [Published 30 years ago, but simply classic!]
• Erik Nord. Cost-Value Analysis in Health Care: Making Sense out of QALYs Cambridge University Press (1999). [Advanced and seminal work by the most eminent health economist]

Reading schedule
Please see the separate file for the tentative schedule of required readings. The course instructor reserves the right to alter the schedule during the fall semester (I have not changed it in previous years, but I may need to change it under certain circumstances).

Requirements and assessments
In order to pass this course, you must complete (1) midterm take-home exam, (2) group research, and (3) final exam.
• 4 short assignments (5pt x 4): 20pt
• Mid-term take-home exam: 20pt
• Conference attendance and participation: 10pt
• Group research: 10pt
• Final exam: 40pt

Assignments
Each response must be maximum 800 words (excluding references and end/footnotes) and submitted through the MyCourses assignment function.

Midterm take-home exam
Midterm exam should be maximum 2,000 words (excluding references and end/footnotes) and submitted through the MyCourses assignment function.

Late submissions
Late submission of midterm take-home exam and assignments will be downgraded at a rate of 3pt per 24 hours on their grade for the course (not 3% on the essay grade), including weekend/holiday days. Requests for extensions will be considered (but not automatically granted) only when requested before the exam is due and substantiated at the time of request by a doctor’s note documenting illness. Requests must be submitted to your TA, cc-ing Professor Hirose. To avoid a late submission penalty, submit WELL BEFORE the due time.

Conference attendance and participation
Weekly conference attendance is mandatory. There will be two conference groups. Please sign up for one of them via Minerva before September 16. Conference is important part of this course because discussion plays fundamental role in philosophy. In conference, you put forward your own arguments, and your arguments will be cross-examined by your classmates under supervision of TA. The success of conference discussion depends on attendance, preparation and participation of students. Therefore, we take attendance and participation very seriously. If you miss two or more conferences, there will be a disproportionate penalty on conference attendance grade.

Group work
Each group proposes and defends a set of recommendations on a specific topic. We will assess the depth, persuasiveness, coherence and originality of group presentations and the performance in Q&A section (presentation 12 min, Q&A 10 min). Everyone in the same group will receive the same grade. However, if two or more students in your group judge that you did not make fair contribution to the group research, we will deduce 5pt from the grade for your group.

Final exam
Examination will take place on the date that the University sets. The exam will consist in a set of short comprehension questions and two essay questions.

The University requires that the following notices appear on every syllabus:
- McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore, all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures (see www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/ for more information).
- In accord with McGill University’s Charter of Students’ Rights, students in this course have the right to submit in English or in French any written work that is to be graded.
- In the event of extraordinary circumstances beyond the University’s control, the content and/or evaluation scheme in this course is subject to change.